

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A hard boiled candy composition comprising:

(a) a confectionery base comprised of a mixture of at least one sugar and at least one carbohydrate bulking agent which is kept in an amorphous or glassy condition;

(b) at least one botanical having an unpleasant mouthfeel; and,

(c) an amount of from about 0.5% to about 5.0% by weight of said composition of an unpleasant mouthfeel suppressing agent consisting essentially of one or more partially hydrogenated vegetable oils or saturated fats, said amount being effective to suppress said unpleasant mouthfeel of said botanical.

Claim 2 (currently amended): The candy composition according to claim 1 wherein the botanical is selected from the group consisting of Echinacea, Siberian Ginseng, Ginko Biloba, Kola Nut, Goldenseal, Golo Kola, Schizandra, Elderberry, St. Johns Wort, Valerian ~~or~~ and Ephedra, and combinations thereof.

Claim 3 (original): The candy composition according to claim 2 wherein the botanical is Echinacea.

Claim 4 (currently amended): The candy composition according to claim 1 wherein the partially hydrogenated vegetable oil is selected from the group consisting of cottonseed, soybean, peanut, palm, sunflower seed ~~or~~ and corn oil and combinations thereof, and

the saturated fat is selected from the group consisting of palm kernel oil, coconut oil, cocoa butter, ~~or~~ and butter, and combinations thereof.

Claim 5 (currently amended): The candy composition according to claim 4 wherein the saturated fat or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil is selected from the group consisting of partially hydrogenated cottonseed oil, palm kernel oil, ~~or~~ and butter, ~~or a~~ and mixture mixtures thereof.

Claim 6 (original): The candy composition according to claim 1 wherein the saturated fat or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil is present at 0.5% to 3.5%.

Claim 7 (previously amended): The candy composition according to claim 1 wherein the saturated fat or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil is present at 0.75% to 3.0%.

Claim 8 (currently amended): The candy composition according to claim 1 wherein the ratio of the saturated fat or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil to the botanical is from ~~1.0/0.6 to 1.0/0.15~~ about 1/1 to about 1/01.

Claim 9 (original): The candy composition according to claim 8 wherein the ratio of the saturated fat or partially hydrogenated oil to the botanical is from 1.0/0.6 to 1.0/0.15.

Claim 10-27 (withdrawn):

Claim 28: (currently amended): A method for suppressing the unpleasant mouthfeel of a hard boiled candy composition which contains a botanical having an unpleasant mouthfeel, which comprises:

(a) providing a confectionery base comprised of a mixture of at least one sugar and at least one carbohydrate bulking agent which is kept in an amorphous or glassy condition and a botanical having an unpleasant mouthfeel, and,

(b) adding thereto from about 0.5% to about 5.0% by weight of said composition of an unpleasant mouthfeel suppressing agent consisting essentially of one or more partially hydrogenated vegetable oils or saturated fats said amount being effective to suppress said unpleasant mouthfeel of said botanical.

Claim 29 (currently amended): The method according to claim 28 wherein the botanical is selected from the group consisting of Echinacea, Siberian Ginseng, Gingko Biloba, Kola Nut, Goldenseal, Golo Kola, Schizandra, Elderberry, St. Johns Wort, Valerian or and Ephedra, and combinations thereof.

Claim 30 (original): The method according to claim 29 wherein the botanical is Echinacea.

Claim 31 (currently amended): The method according to claim 28 wherein the partially hydrogenated vegetable oil is selected from the group consisting of cottonseed, soybean, peanut, palm, sunflower seed or corn oil, and the saturated fat is palm kernel oil, coconut oil, cocoa butter, or and butter and or mixtures thereof.

Claim 32 (currently amended): The method according to claim 31 wherein the saturated fat or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil is selected from the group consisting of partially cottonseed oil, palm kernel oil, ~~or~~ and butter, ~~or a~~ and ~~mixture~~ mixture thereof.

Claim 33 (original): The method according to claim 28 wherein the saturated fat or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil is present at 0.5% to 3.5%.

Claim 34 (original): The method according to claim 33 wherein the saturated fat or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil is present at 0.75% to 3.0%.

Claim 35 (original): The method according to claim 28 wherein the ratio of the saturated fat or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil to the botanical is from about 1/1 to about 1/0.1.

Claim 36 (original): The method according to claim 35 wherein the ratio of the saturated fat or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil to the botanical is from 1.0/0.6 to 1.0/0.15.

Claims 37 – 45 (canceled without prejudice).

Claim 46-54 (withdrawn).

Claim 55 (currently amended): A hard boiled candy composition ~~comprising~~ consisting essentially of :

(a) a confectionery base comprised of a mixture of at least one sugar and at least one carbohydrate bulking agent which is kept in an amorphous or glassy condition;

(b) at least one botanical having unpleasant mouthfeel; and

(c) an unpleasant mouthfeel suppressing agent consisting essentially of from about 0.5% to about 5.0% by weight of said composition of one or more partially hydrogenated vegetable oils or saturated fats, said amount being effective to suppress said unpleasant mouthfeel of said botanical.